Panel approves 'booze crackdown'

By MIKE DUNNE
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A Metro Council committee Wednesday approved a series of proposals aimed at clamping down on those selling alcohol to minors.

The Executive Committee approved measures that would increase fines and better coordinate alcohol violations.

"We know we're not naive enough to think that we're going to eliminate the availability of alcohol to minors, but we may be able to decrease it and save some lives" of drinking minors, Councilman Doug Welborn, sponsor of the measures, said.

The changes came from a special task force that spent several weeks last spring looking at ways to cut the availability of alcohol.

Anyone convicted of selling or distributing alcoholic beverages to minors would receive a mandatory suspension of his liquor licenses, a fine and possibly a jail sentence under a proposal from the task force.

A companion measure to handle such violations administratively through the local Alcoholic Beverage Control Board will go without recommendation to the council because of a question in wording.

The council has already passed resolutions that discourage the district attorney and city prosecutor from dismissing any such cases and a proposal to create a hotline for reporting illegal sales and notification of parents in all instances in which children are in possession of alcohol.

An amendment to current liquor laws would require a mandatory suspension of the liquor licenses for five days upon first conviction, a 30-day suspension upon second conviction and a one-year suspension on the third or subsequent conviction of any person selling or distributing alcoholic beverages to minors.

A fine of not less than $100 and not more than $300 would be imposed on first conviction, and between $150 and $300 on second conviction along with a possible imprisonment of not more than 60 days.

A second proposed ordinance amendment would require the district attorney and the Alcohol Beverage Control board to notify one another of any convictions in court relative to violation of liquor laws. Such notification would be considered a formal complaint to the board.

The committee also approved a proposal that all properly filed complaints shall be presented to the board for its consideration before the case can be dismissed without further investigation.

All people involved in selling or dispensing alcohol would be required to sign a statement acknowledging that he is aware of laws pertaining to juveniles. The statement would have to be executed prior to the issuance or renewal of a license.

The proposals will be considered by the full council next week.